Former Apartment Of Novel Ransacked

By HOKE MAY

The apartment where the Gordon Novel letter was found has been ransacked and burglarized, its occupants told the district attorney's office today.

Two young women who rented the Vieux Carre living quarters after Novel fled New Orleans said they found the lock ripped from the door Thursday evening.

Neighbors said they heard "someone walking around" in the upstairs apartment "most of the day."

THAT WAS BEFORE the States-Item first reported the finding of the Novel letter draft which asks a "Mr. Weiss" to get him "out of this mess" in March.

Novel is fighting extradition as a burglary conspiracy suspect whom Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison wants as a material witness in his Kennedy death plot investigation.

The young women said their apartment was "a mess" after the intruder methodically searched through cabinets, dresser drawers, personal papers and clothes belonging to the occupants.

A TELEVISION SET and a radio were stolen during the foray, but Asst. DA Andrew

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Sciambra said he believed the theft was "no more than a cover."

"I don't believe there is any doubt that this entry and search was directly connected with the finding of Novel's letter," the DA's aide asserted.

"There is too much evidence that whoever was here was looking for something besides a TV set and a radio," he added.

Although reports of the letter find had not been published when the apartment was entered, a number of persons knew it had been discovered in Novel's former lodgings.

COPIES HAD BEEN distributed Monday and Tuesday to an independent handwriting analyst, Novel's attorney, Steven Plotkin, and to others whose opinion was sought concerning its authenticity.

The young women, who asked that their names be withheld, notified New Orleans police of the break-in when they discovered it after returning from work Thursday evening.

Police officers investigated then. When the account of the letter and its importance was printed in the newspapers, they made a direct report to the DA's office.

"We were both pretty upset," one of the girls said. "The lock had been pulled off the door, and the place was a mess."

SHE SAID THERE were boxes full of Novel's papers in the apartment when she and her roommate first moved in. She said the documents are now in storage.

The "Mr. Weiss" letter draft was found under a plastic drainboard on the sink while the girls were cleaning.

It was given by them to a student at a local university. He, in turn, showed it to a friend of a States-Item reporter. In that way it reached the newspaper.

THE FINDING OF the letter prompted Plotkin, Novel's attorney, to confirm that his client had worked for the United States Central Intelligence Agency here during 1961. The States-Item reported Novel's CIA affiliations a month earlier.

The letter draft was handwritten in pencil on pages from a yellow legal pad. It asked "Mr. Weiss" to help him get away before he was forced to testify about possible "top secret" matters related to an operation named "Double-Chek Corporation of Miami."